{ See Note at end. }

UNITY

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FOR

FREEDOM, FELLOWSHIP AND CHARACTER IN RELIGION.

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THE TWO WORLDS.

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2 Cor., iv, 18. For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Man is a being who belongs to two worlds. One is the actual, visible world; the other is the ideal, invisible world. The actual world is the world of things as one sees them. The ideal world is of things as they ought to be. Thus one sees a line or a figure, and behind the actual line which is faulty or the figure which is imperfect, one sees the perfect line or figure. To the bodily eye it is invisible, but one does not only see with the bodily eye. One also has entrance into a world where the sight is finer than of the most perfect eye.

The entrance into this second world is what makes man's distinction from the animals. For the animal does not see the ideal line or figure beside the actual, faulty line or figure. The animal, besides seeing his actual self in the mirror, does not also see his ideal self among the pictures of the invisible world. Besides his dreams of things which he has actually seen, beyond the memory of his kind human master, he does not also have dreams and visions of things quite beyond any visible representation: he does not soar to the sight of a master perfect and infinite. Whereas, man at every step is reminded that this actual world of things seen, is only a book of signs, as it were, to set forth the greater world which is behind it and into which he makes constant excursions.

It is very early that the child gets hints how he is to heir to unknown possessions beyond all the things which his eyes see. A fairy land is opened to him with beautiful things and wonderful people, such as no one ever has seen. The fairy land is only the curious distortion, while his vision becomes accustomed to the light,

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of facts more beautiful and wondrous than fairy tale ever disclosed in the ideal world to which he belongs.

Study also brings us at once into the world of ideals. Geometry for example is a study altogether of lines and forms which do not exist except in the world of the invisible. For the rough drawings of them on boards and slates are not the real forms which we study. It is not therefore geometry or the study of our earth, as the name implies, but it is the study of the world where our souls have inheritance.

Architecture and Art obviously carry one into the world of ideal things. The temple, the cathedral, the statue, the picture which your eyes see, are each only an embodiment of a thought. You must belong in the ideal world to care for the things of Art and Architecture. As an animal you care nothing for them. As a man you care for something more than the actual embodiment in stone or carving. You care for the idea which the actual thing only illustrates. The quantity of your enjoyment of the work of art, depends not on what your eyes see, but what your mind sees; that is, the strictly invisible things.

You have openings into the ideal world where you do not expect them. You follow science perhaps. You say, "we will study matters of fact. We will stay in the actual world and have no knowledge but of things visible and tangible." But you cannot possibly stay in the actual world. You cannot begin to study rocks, flowers, dust, without coming into the presence of ideal and invisible things. You arrange rocks or plants into classes and orders. You analyze the dust into molecules and proportions. You cannot study without these processes. Your orders and classes, your molecules and mathematical proportions are all in the ideal world. No one sees them. No actual thing is quite true to them. You believe in them as you believe in religion, not because you see them with your eyes, but because you are a being made to go out of the actual world where these things are not, into an ideal world where these things are.

You might suppose for example that nothing was so actual as the law of gravitation. That you call it a law, however, is a hint that it is not actual. A law is a fact of the ideal world. It is not the statement of what is as you see it with your eyes. It is the statement of what ought to be. For the statement of what you see with your eyes, as stones, leaves, feathers falling to the ground, would not give you the law of gravitation. The law is not at all apparent at first.

So of all the mechanical principles. You never see the principle fully carried out. The actual pulley, the lever, the wedge never does what the mechanical principle says that it ought to do. And yet you fully believe in the ideal principle. You say "if all the friction could be got rid of, if there were no resistance of the air, if the material of the lever would not bend," that is to say if you could take everything out of the actual world into the ideal world, then the principle would work completely.

Is not this belief in the ideal world marvelous! Is it not strangely significant to find cool, critical minds who even boast that they believe nothing which they cannot see, holding faith in ideal principles which the actual world will never exactly bear out; nay, when the actual facts raise all sorts of exceptions and irregularities! Yes, to find such men not only holding to the ideal law which is not actually visible anywhere in this world, but also predicating that the same law holds in all the stars, to the furthest invisible particle of matter!

Thus man is an idealist as soon as he is a thinker. For thought at every point leads him away from what is, in the actual world, to what is suggested in the ideal world; from the facts as you see them to the underlying fact of what ought to be; from the imperfect, actual thing towards the perfect ideal thing, the

law, the principle, the thought which the actual only embodies.

We begin to feel now that the ideal world is the most real world of the two. The actual world always changes. It is not two moments the same. It has not two things in it alike. You can imagine it all destroyed. But the ideal world would remain. Its facts, its laws, its thoughts, its principles, its models would hold good. They would apply in a new universe as truly as they apply here. Yes, if they were nowhere actually embodied, to the mind which had once entered into their presence they would remain equally real. For surely the indestructible plan in the mind of the builder, after which a hundred successive houses are built, is more real than the houses which go to decay.

We have so far purposely refrained from speaking of morals and religion. We have wished first to show how broad the basis of our belief in the ideal world is. We have begun by pointing out how "common facts," as they are called, and the material sciences, have their foundation in the ideal world and are not known at all without reference to ideal and invisible principles. In short, till a man enters the great ideal world, sees its principles, its laws, its possibilities, its standards—he is not yet a man but only an infant. A race of such men we call savages.

Now let us for a moment see the two worlds in which we find ourselves, respecting conduct and morals. One world is of the actual. It is full of discords and disagreements. No two men seem to be morally alike. No two generations have the same moral code. "Behold the anarchy!" some one says; "Where is there any stable morality? Where is there any certain principle by which one can grapple in all times and be morally safe?" How is not morality only the highest expediency of each individual, who adapts himself as well as he knows how to his circumstances, is honest as long as honesty is policy and then stops being honest; tells the truth according to convenience; and holds human life according to the money value which can be produced by it?

So much for actual morality as long as a man only regards the world of things which his eyes see. And yet every one knows that a man who is only moral in the realm of this actual morality, who is moral only as circumstances require, is not moral at all. The morality of a man on the contrary belongs in the ideal world, just like science or art; in ideal laws and principles which hold as absolutely certain whether you ever see them actually carried out or not; which govern and sustain actual conduct. You are even more sure of what ought to be than of what is. If no soul had ever exhibited perfect truthfulness, you would be sure of the law. If no soul had ever shown perfect love, there is the absolute, ideal fact. These things hold if the worlds were resolved into chaos, the eternal principles on which new worlds would have to be.

See now what it means to live in two worlds at once. Two men are at work together on a great cathedral tower. One is half-witted. He would be equally content if he were bidden to wheel sand in the desert. Give him only food and sleep and he will serve you where you put him. This half-witted workman is only in the world of the actual. The other workman has caught the builder's plan. He sees why every stone is laid in its place. He carries tower and spire and delicate carving in his thought. He has become an enthusiast for the beautiful cathedral. He would starve, if you needed, to help carry the work through. So of two men, living side by side and performing duties together. One does right because of necessity. Somewhere else he would do wrong. He is half-witted; he only lives in the world of the actual. The other man lives in two worlds; he has seen the builder's plan. Henceforth you could not tempt that man to do wrong. The first man has his price by which the devil could buy him, but no price whatever could tempt the other to do wrong.

Suppose now, you have these distinct realms of the ideal world, the realm of science, the realm of art, the realm of human conduct, each realm imperative in its ideal requirements, the actual world everywhere showing mysterious tendency towards the embodiment of the ideal, but showing also strange contradictions to it—what would you make of these distinct realms of the ideal world? How could you keep them distinct? You could not keep them distinct. The laws of thought will not permit this. You must bring these ideal realms together, like the separate states, under one government. This is religion. Religion is the harmony of all the realms of the ideal universe. It declares of all which the ideal world presents, Beneficence, Love, God. Into this ideal world no evil enters. It is the eternal plan of the cathedral of God.

In fact this ideal world, where the builder is God, is the real universe. The actual world is only a universe by virtue of this other ideal world which it sets forth, but it would not be a universe for a moment but only a whirling chaos except for the ideal principles which hold it together. So of every object of beauty in it, every jewel, graceful form, noble act or gracious life. So of the whole history of humanity. That which makes each thing a whole in itself or gives it a place in its greater whole, is some law or thought of the ideal world. Religion binds all together, gives the whole a name, fills all with the present life of God.

Thus while science alone carries you into one realm of the ideal world and leaves you without knowing what you are there for; and art carries you into another realm and leaves you there in wonder at visions of beauty which put your little life to shame; and duty carries you into the third realm and imposes herculean tasks on your shoulders, religion gives you the key to the majestic enigma in pronouncing the name of Our Father. Now you see the deathless glory of duty. You are glad before visions which beckon you to ages of toil for fulfillment, you are content in the imperfect, actual world with the eternal thoughts and laws which you here only study.

But, some one says, is not this ideal world and ideal life, visionary and unpractical, a beautiful dream indeed, but apart from the matter-of-fact world in which we mostly live? On the contrary, we must by this time have seen how the ideal world is that in which all practice has its inspiration and finds its rules. The practical man is not the man who lives only in one world, the half-witted workman who only carries stones, but the practical man lives in both worlds at once. He who knows best the invisible laws, out of which all material things are welded together, he who knows the ideal strength of iron bars and bolts or what they ought to do; he who knows the abstract principles which hold good in all space, he whose thought ranges free amidst all the thoughts of God, he shall best build our iron bridges, bore our mountains with tunnels, bind the seas with canals and build our towers with completest confidence against winds and storms.

So of the painters and singers. The practical man is not the realist who copies what actually is, the human face as one sees it, the cries and screams of nature as one hears them; but for success such as generations worship and cross the oceans to see, the practical artist must have lived in both worlds; he must have seen the ideal faces of the mother and child, he must have heard, like the deaf Beethoven, melodies which no instrument could render. Yes, he must have watched the ideal standards to distinguish among all the changing, imperfect, actual types, those few which most clearly kept the ideal laws of beauty. But the so-called practical men, who had no ideals, who ever heard their names mentioned in the undying roll of fame in art or song!

Much more then in conduct; the practical men are not those who live only in

the actual world. Tell me what high use such men ever served. They did not make laws which kept society safe. They did not weld tribes together into strong nations. But the most practical men in society, in politics, in business, too, the world's law-givers and statesmen, were men who drew their inspiration from the unseen world; had visions of justice which the actual world never had yet carried out, had dreams of political safety and virtue which the actual world only suggested by contrast; had standards of mercantile honor which actual facts seemed to contradict. These were the world's most practical men.

What shall we say then of the life in the ideal world in its practical bearing on love? Or what is more practical than that love should fill the homes of the world? Or what would it be worth if we had everything else and love were to die? And yet love simply depends on the ideal realm. Beneath the actual child or the actual friend, we see the ideal man or woman, which is to be, the possible hero or heroine. It is that which we worship. It is that which we love. Nay, our love for men rises or falls according to the ideal life which is in them. Does the new friend prove to live only in the actual world, without principles, standards, visions, aspirations towards what ought to be? Nothing then which he possesses, neither wit, beauty nor brilliant entertainment can ever admit such an one to the inner shrine of our intimacy. Has husband or wife no ideals? Alas! then, for the home which is not founded in both worlds at once and cannot therefore grow towards the home which ought to be!

The truth is, the actual world has no enthusiasms, no heroisms, no prophecies to stir a man's blood with courage or hope. We can exist, we can vegetate, that is all we can do in the actual world. Fill our souls now with the breath of the ideal world. Open our ears to hear its trumpet calls. Bring us into a new world of enthusiasms, sublime faiths and stirring hopes. Is it God who orders our work? We can do double work. We can do kinds of work before which we had stood powerless. We can bear disasters which before were not worth bearing. It is as though our lives were joined to the band of universal forces.

There is thus nothing so practical as religion. It enlarges the working power of the world.

We say much of progress. We should die without our hope in it. But what is progress? It is entirely ideal. It comes not from our knowing what is, but from our divine prerogative of knowing what ought to be. "He was in advance of his age," men have said of one and another inspired mind, inventors, discoverers, teachers. That is, such men lived in two worlds. Thus the inspirations which bear humanity towards new levels of liberty, justice and happiness come sweeping in from the realm of the unseen. Where is the enthusiasm large enough to fill the world with factories and great towns, to increase the world's swarming populations, to feed and clothe millions of bodies, if feeding and clothing were all? Where is the motive here mighty enough to command men to abdicate selfish power, to bid the Vanderbilts hold their wealth as trustees, to bid self-indulgence sacrifice its hurtful pleasures, if the end were only a rich world, eating and drinking and dying. No, the progress such as shall awaken men's undying enthusiasm, command the strong to the aid of the weak, hold the multitude to obedience and justice:—such progress in the future as in the past must depend on man's eternal faiths in the ideal facts, the love of God and immortal progress.

Actual facts, figures, lists of statistics curiously bear out all that we are saying. The wealth of a land in dollars depends on the ideal things which enter into the life of its people. Do not ask how rich the land is, unless you ask how much its people believe, how dear they hold liberty, how they respect law, what kind of art they foster, whether they put their

money into schools and churches. For these ideal things, learning, liberty, morals, are the measure of their prosperity. These ideal things are what their wealth is for and the essential conditions of holding it. Religion only binds these things together under the ineffable name.

It is easy to see now what man is here for. He is here to bring the actual and the ideal together. In the actual, imperfect world, in the faulty, actual circumstances of society and politics, in the business which falls short of honesty, in the home where friction stops the course of love, the true man is set to bend the actual towards the ideal. The kingdom of God is the world as it ought to be. The Christ is the great idealist who gives his life up for his faith. The prayer, "Thy kingdom come," is the prayer that this actual world to the remotest corner of its life may agree with the ideal world—its actual men become the ideal men whom Jesus saw in the plan, its actual society become the ideal society of humanity, its actual evils give way to blessedness. To pray this prayer, not with words only but with deeds, to live in both worlds as God's child, to see the ideal and make it come to pass, is the secret of human contentment. For the actual world, be it as bad as you please, cannot hurt you who live to make the crooked straight, and mould the actual to the ideal.

Discontent is only the reverse of this. Discontent is that you are made to live in two worlds and you live in one. Discontent is that you see the ideal line and will not draw it, that you know the law of right, and live in sin ;—in short that you see whenever you open your eyes to the ideal world, beautiful models which you are doing nothing to set forth and hear holy voices bidding you to duties which you will not perform. Here is the world's discontent.

One thing more, the key to the profoundest mystery of life. The two worlds, the actual and the ideal, require two distinct kinds of work. The work of the actual world is physical, measured by pounds or by muscular and nervous fatigue. So much work measured thus by power of men or horses and the great building, the mighty excavation, the world's supply of food or clothes is completed. But the work of the ideal world is measured in cares, sorrows, pains, disappointments, sympathies. These are the needful material with which poets and artists work.

> "There is in fate what only poets see,
> There is fate the noblest poesie."

For without the world's tragedies, the poetry could not be. There is thus no literature worthy the name, which did not mould tears and grief and blood into the mortar of its foundation stones. There is no eloquence spoken out of the ideal world of inspiration and enthusiasm which is not measured in this ideal work which we call pain or sympathy, according as the speaker has suffered himself or has suffered in and with others. Nay, these are subjects, the highest which touch man's life, on which no one is given right to speak, save as he has felt on his forehead the baptism of fire, not to say blood. "Blessed are the meek, blessed are the peace-makers. Blessed are the pure in heart." The right to say these things, could not be bought in the market. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." No man could say that to another who had not known the discipline of this ideal work.

It is in this way alone that we are able to see why God should let his children suffer. Measured by the standards of the actual world, pain, sorrow, loss, death, all seem unutterable waste. They do not leave after them any wealth which you can measure by physical standards. For in the actual world only those kinds of work seem profitable which you can see with your eyes. But in the ideal world all this changes. We enter into the presence of a new kind of values. Slowly and surely through the ages, out of men's toil, out of hand-toil and heart-toil, out of pain which men did not understand, out of oppressive burdens,

binding soul to soul, and nation to nation, out of generations of death and new birth, was all the time growing in its stately beauty, the eternal temple of God, towards whose walls no little child's sorrow failed to pay its precious tribute. Ah! friends, in view of the ideal world where we have our immortal home, let us not fear what the actual world does to us. Nay, let us be glad in this actual world, whose beauty, whose grandeur, whose mystery always suggests the real and eternal for which we strive, more beautiful than eye of man ever has seen.

Our "Church-Door Pulpit" hints its purpose in its name. It aims to furnish fortnightly a transfigured tract,—transfigured by being paid for, and by representing not so much a given system of beliefs as the emphasis, in somewhat varying beliefs, on "Freedom, Fellowship and Character in Religion;" this tract to be taken from the rack or table at the church-door to the home, there to serve its little mission by reading in the family, lending to a neighbor, mailing to a distant friend, etc. We hope the plan may be destined to wide adoption by Liberal churches as part of their regular church-work.

The word "UNITY" in the title bears to the Committee who arrange the series a wide meaning, pointing more to the substance, than to the forms, of religious thought and faith; and in inviting contributions they have sought, not only through the whole range, but in both directions beyond the range, of those who bear the "Unitarian" name,—though most of the writers must naturally be found within that name. "New Orthodoxy," "New Judaism," those who care for no name but "Religion," and the "Ethical Societies," will all be represented. The choice of subject is left to the writers; and *each writer is responsible for his own utterance alone, and for nothing else in the series.* "One of your best—a life-helping sermon, or a thought-sermon reaching the life," was the invitation sent out.